

VZCZCXYZ0013
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHKG #1307/01 2421235
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 301235Z AUG 07
FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5265
INFO RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE
RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 0493
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO 2902
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 001307

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CAR (JOE TILGHMAN)
INR/IAA (BOB CARHART)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/22/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [PINR](#) [ECON](#) [SOCI](#) [ENRG](#) [KCOR](#) [JM](#)
SUBJECT: JAMAICA: OPPOSITION DRAWS EVEN WITH RULING PARTY
IN RUN-UP TO SEPTEMBER 3 ELECTION; LITTLE EVIDENCE OF
CHAVEZ'S INFLUENCE

REF: A. KINGSTON 1288 (232000Z AUG 07)

[1](#)B. KINGSTON 953 (191911ZBJUN 07)(NOTAL)
[1](#)C. KINGSTON 393 (211315Z MAR 07)(NOTAL)

Classified By: Ambassador Brenda L. Johnson, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

1.(C) In private discussions with senior Embassy officers, a key senior Jamaican intelligence official assesses that:

(A) The Opposition Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) has drawn even with the ruling People's National Party (PNP) across the country, and with momentum in its favor could well win a majority of seats in Parliament in national elections to be held September 3.

(B) The ruling PNP's leadership is in reactive mode, as evidenced by the recent confusion in the aftermath of Hurricane Dean regarding the postponement of the election until September 3 (reftel A), which left an impression of disarray and dissension among the Cabinet of Prime Minister (PM) Portia Simpson Miller (PSM).

(C) Petrocaribe notwithstanding, PSM and Foreign Minister Anthony Hylton thus far have taken a cautious approach in dealing with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. Jamaica was looking to strengthen ties with Mexico. If, as alleged by Opposition JLP Leader Bruce Golding (reftel C), Chavez has contributed large sums of cash to fund PSM's election, there has been little evidence of it in the final weeks of the campaign. Indeed, PSM's ruling PNP appears short of funds, while the opposition JLP spends lavishly. Chavez in fact may have offered cash to PSM, but on conditions which she and Hylton would not accept.

(D) The current campaign has seen more violence than the 2002 elections; this up tick may be attributable to a longer campaign season. Political maturity and public concentration on hurricane recovery efforts have mitigated the threat of violence somewhat. Nevertheless, the risk of post-election violence remains real, particularly in marginal constituencies which may change hands.

(E) Barring legal obstacles, the swearing in of the new PM should be completed on September 4 or 5, with a new Cabinet in place by September 6 or 7.

(F) The respected Minister of National Security Dr. Peter Phillips's relations with PSM remain difficult. ((Note: just over a year ago, PSM defeated Phillips in a bitterly contested struggle to succeed P.J. Patterson as PNP Leader and PM. End Note.)) Whether, in the event of a PNP victory, PSM will ask Phillips to stay on in his current position is uncertain; if not, the current Minister of Labour and Social Security Derrick Kellier may be a likely successor.
End Summary.

Ministry of National Security
deems investigation of candidates' nationalities to be impractical

2.(C) The Security Advisor to the Government of Jamaica (GoJ)'s Minister of National Security, Major Dave (Vincent) Anderson, met with DCM, DEA AttachQ, and PolOff the morning of August 28 to discuss the prevailing and anticipated climate in the run-up to national elections on September 3 (reftels). Anderson began by revealing that the leadership of the Opposition Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) recently had contacted him to request his assistance in confirming whether or not certain of the Party's candidates held U.S. citizenship, which under the Constitution eventually could disqualify them as Members of Parliament (reftel A). He had replied that, in keeping with the principle of even-handedness, any such investigation would have to be undertaken for all 146 nominated candidates, and with respect to any foreign allegiances they might hold (e.g., U.K. and Canadian, as well as U.S.); this would be impractical. DCM noted that, under the provisions of the Privacy Act, the USG would be unable to release information regarding any U.S. citizen without his/her written consent.

Ruling PNP in reactive mode; JLP has drawn even

3.(C) Anderson then observed that the apparatus of the ruling People's National Party (PNP) now seemed to be in a "reactive mode." In early July, the Party's leadership had made a mistake by deciding not to call the elections for July 30. This decision had been made because three PNP candidates in key constituenciesQ*Peter Bunting in Manchester Central, Richard Azan in Northwest Clarendon, and Horace Dalley in North ClarendonQ*were lagging behind in tight races. Rather than delaying until late August in hopes their positions would improve, the PNP should have gone ahead with a July 30 election and concentrated resources to shore up these candidates. Now, the JLP had drawn even with the PNP across the country, and might well win a majority in Parliament.

Confusion surrounding postponement of elections
in aftermath of Hurricane Dean

4.(C) In response to DCM's inquiry regarding recent confusion in the aftermath of Hurricane Dean regarding the postponement of the election until September 3 (reftels), Anderson said that "differing legal interpretations among luminaries" had been compounded by a "lack of statesmanship." The postponement recommendation of the Electoral Commission of Jamaica (ECJ) first should have been sent to Cabinet rather than directly to the Governor General. Some within the PNP had wanted to postpone elections a full 30 days, or to reconvene Parliament to seek approval of an even longer delay. Anderson noted that, when he had given a pre-election intelligence briefing to the Cabinet back in July, he had mentioned the possibility of a hurricane forcing a postponement; unfortunately, Cabinet had not prepared a plan for this contingencyQ*hence the confusion.

Risk of election-related violence

5.(C) Anderson then said he did not anticipate much crime

between now and September 3. People were focused on hurricane relief and recovery efforts, which dampened crime. The ECJ had been correct to issue warnings to candidates in St. Andrew West Central and St. Elizabeth South East that, if violent incidents continued, elections could be postponed in these constituencies. The ECJ had requested that, on election day, the police escort every ballot box from the polling stations to the counting centers; in St. Elizabeth and Manchester, this could delay the delivery of ballot boxes, and the counts thus might not be completed until 9:00 p.m. In response to DCM's inquiry, Anderson said that the 2002 election campaign had been more peaceful, with fewer murders; he attributed the up tick in violence to the longer duration of the current campaign.

6.(C) Anderson cited St. Andrew South East and Portland West as particularly volatile constituencies. In some of the marginal constituencies, recounts and/or legal challenges were possible. The risk of post-election violence was real, particularly in marginal constituencies which changed hands. Large-scale demonstrations, with the attendant security risks, were possible. However, the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) had had two months to prepare, and would be ready to protect the utilities, Bank of Jamaica, and other potential targets. Anderson said that some months ago he had believed that post-election crime and violence would be a more serious threat; in the interim, political maturity and public concentration on hurricane recovery efforts had mitigated the threat.

Changes at Ministry of National Security

7.(C) In response to DCM's inquiry regarding possible post-election changes at the Ministry of National Security, Anderson noted that Permanent Secretary Gilbert Scott's contract would be up in November, and he would depart at that time. DCM said the Embassy had worked closely and effectively with Scott; we hoped the good working relations would continue with his successor. As for the respected Minister of National Security Dr. Peter Phillips, Anderson said his relations with PSM had remained difficult. ((Note: just over a year ago, PSM defeated Phillips in a bitterly

contested struggle to succeed P.J. Patterson as PNP Leader and PM. End Note.)) In response to DCM's inquiry as to whether, in the event of a PNP victory, PSM would ask Phillips to stay in his current position, Anderson said this might depend on the size of PSM's majority in parliament: if the PNP enjoyed a narrow majority, PSM might be forced to keep Phillips on; conversely, if she enjoyed a comfortable majority, PSM might prefer that he depart. In the latter scenario, according to Anderson, the current Minister of Labour and Social Security Derrick Kellier would be the likeliest successor to Phillips.

Chavez's influence on election

8.(C) Looking further afield, Anderson said that, Petrocaribe notwithstanding, PSM had taken a cautious approach to Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. Foreign Minister Anthony Hylton was "not playing Chavez's game." Instead, Jamaica was looking to strengthen its ties with Mexico. DCM noted that Washington had great respect for President Calderon. ((Comment: If, as alleged by Opposition Leader Bruce Golding (reftel C), Chavez has contributed large sums of cash to fund PSM's election, there has been little evidence of it thus far in the campaign. Indeed, PSM's ruling PNP appears short of funds, while the opposition JLP spends lavishly. A number of observers have speculated that Chavez may have offered cash to PSM, but on conditions which she and Hylton would not accept; this theory is consistent with Anderson's observations. End Comment.))

Next PM to be sworn in September 4/5,
New Cabinet in place by September 6/7

9.(C) In response to DCM's inquiry, Anderson said that the swearing in of the new PM should be completed on September 4 or 5, with a new Cabinet in place by September 6 or 7. The new Government would be wise to consult key stakeholders throughout the country, including the diplomatic missions of the U.S., U.K., and Canada. He concluded by expressing hope that the Embassy would remain a vital stakeholder in Jamaica, and urged that the Ambassador "build inroads with Jamaica House early." DCM observed that, whatever the outcome of the election, ties between Jamaica and the U.S. would remain strong; geography, trade, migration, tourism, and cultural affinity ensured this.
JOHNSON